

Policy of Heterodox Expressions: Social conflict in the scenarios of the Argentinean crises

Adrián Scribano

Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina / adrianscribano@gmail.com

Ximena Cabral

Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina / ximenacabral@yahoo.com

Abstract: The moments of externalization of the conflicts make it possible to observe how the protests are linked to the “made-in-scene” and selection of the construction of expressive resources. These moments make it possible to find the tracks that make it possible to trace a “plus” connecting with the complaints filed, too. This article aims to reconstruct the connections between expressive resources, “aesthetic-in-the-street” and heterodox practices. The strategy chosen here can be schematized as follows: 1) discusses the characteristics of the relationship between expressiveness, crisis and politics, 2) scenes-postcards of the city of Córdoba, Argentina, are reconstructed through expressive resources of the collective actions, and 3) summarizes some of the games of language associated with those cards. It concludes by advocating the need to deepen into the analysis of collective actions, including the expressive resources as a key to overcome a narrow reading of the social claims from them.

Key words: expressive resources, social conflict, visibility, collective action, crisis.

Resumen: Los momentos de externalización de los conflictos permiten observar cómo la protesta se vincula con la “puesta-en-escena” de la construcción-selección de recursos expresivos y con las huellas que hacen posible rastrear un plus en las demandas entabladas. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo reconstruir las conexiones entre recursos expresivos, “estéticas-en-las-calles” y prácticas heterodoxas. La estrategia que seguimos aquí es posible de ser esquematizada del siguiente modo: 1) se discuten las características de las relaciones entre expresividad, crisis y política; 2) se reconstruyen las escenas-postales de la ciudad de Córdoba, Argentina, a través de los recursos expresivos de las acciones colectivas; y 3) se sintetizan algunos “juegos del lenguaje” asociados a dichas postales. Se finaliza abogando por la necesidad de profundizar los análisis de las acciones colectivas que incluyan los recursos expresivos como un elemento central para superar un mero análisis desde las demandas de las mismas.

Palabras clave: recursos expresivos, conflicto social, visibilidad, acción colectiva, crisis.

Introduction

The depredation of common goods, the regulation of sensations and the deepening into the “renewed ways” of repression, characterize the current state in global capitalism development. In the research we have done in the framework of the Collective Action and Social Conflict Study Program (*Programa de Estudios sobre Acción Colectiva y Conflicto Social*)¹ we have identified and described, in several ways, the alluded characteristics of Argentina, where we have explored and explained how the creation of social ghosts and fantasies is made effective. In the present article we will focus on the identification, description and analysis of expressive resources in social protests, as one of the axes in which a conjunction of heterodox practices can be pointed out, regarding such processes. Therefore, we will use the expressive resources used in, and ever since, the 2001 crisis in the city of Cordoba, Argentina; as an empirical reference, because of the collective actors and the individuals protesting.

Since the nineties the pursuit of visibility has been one of the key concerns of social movements and collective actions. We will inquire, from the expressive dimension of collective actions, into what the expressiveness of the action allows seeing, which these messages that collective actions make evident are, regarding the sutures and fails in the social structuring processes. Hence this perspective, starting from an analysis of expressive resources, constitutes a sort of introduction in order to re-construct the conflictive plot in the period and, at the same time, it would make it possible to advance in tracking the “plus” of the collective actions claims.

A gigantic faucet in the middle of the street, travelling inside a toilet, phrases and scenes of improbable interactions; vibrant colors, figures and ears in *papier-mâché* are some of the materializations that occupied the streets of Cordoba, Argentina in past years. When the voice is not enough a multiplicity of “means”, transformed into messages, appears; new materializations turned into the expression of the silenced by the obvious of what is denounced emerge, due to the lack (or excess) of words, due to the practices that are not there, but exist.

Such materializations try to “call to attention”, they are instruments, which the subjects pick, create and appropriate in order to be heard letting themselves be seen. In this sense, collective action itself is a search for visibility, for being noticed by the ex-citizens, by the expelled ones and by those expropriated of their voices and materializations.² These “performed” expressions make it possible, and need

¹ Cfr. <<http://www.accioncolectiva.com.ar>>.

² A more explicit explanation on the relationship between visibility and collective action in the context of the neoliberal policies application in the decade of 1990 (Scribano, 1999).

for, natives and foreign to take notes and therefore, in a simultaneous way, find the key of an action grammar and body geometry, which leave millions of individuals without the possibility to be seen, heard and recognized.

In this scenario social protest can be understood as a moment to visualize collective action and as the externalization of a multiplicity of previous conflictive networks; and it is then, in that time and space where protest is linked to collective performance, beginning from the construction-selection of expressive resources.

In the studied period,³ the expressive resources used in the conflictive situation in Cordoba allow us to assemble drawings, which in similarity to puzzles, to pictures which articulate one another, but every single one is colored in its own registration. These drawings can be assembled and articulated (among other means) by “images” that form postcards of the conflictive city and by “quotations” that the agents disseminate to denote the intentions and contents of actions. In this sense, the puzzle “sensation” indicates a way to re-assemble the “street-aesthetics” that was built in quotidian life.

So, at a first moment, we will re-construct the links between conflict, protest and expressive resources in order to carry out a description of the protest in crisis scenarios and, starting from there, review some of this postcards and quotations that emerge in the conflictive Cordoba.

Expressiveness in crisis scenarios

Conflict, scenarios and aesthetics

Adjustment policies, privatizations, concentration of income and predation of natural resources gradually generated an increase in social conflicts and a chaining of protests in the late nineties in Latin America. The “Washington Consensus” and the implementation of policies from the neoliberal project in the region, established marked scenarios of crisis, which were became obvious with the emergence of collective groups, social movements and mass insurrections that characterized the region between the late XX century and early XXI century.

³ We have earlier quoted the papers of our Research Program, which, from different perspectives, describe and explain the last 10 years of the roads taken by social movements and protests in Argentina. The mentioned period was characterized; just name the most important, by three fundamental elements: the rupture of political and social accumulation regime, on which Menem’s administration was based, founded on neoliberal policies, the rise of multiple and varied collective practices, which extended from the birth of social movements to the accumulation of “new”, manage practices in the enterprises (recovered factories) and the modifications in the ways the social protests assumed. For a detailed analysis of these characteristics, see Scribano and Schuster (2001) and Scribano (2003a, 2003b).

In this sense, we can argue that collective action, by the end of the nineties, expanded into mass protests, which contributed to set up “new demands” related to sayings and practices, characterized by significant creativity in the ways of revealing and rebelling.

Such protests were distinguished by the creativity with which the conflictive networks, which they belonged to, were re-constructed and performed. A powerful image, in this sense, was the re-appropriation of the streets as a space for expression and performances; as a surface for inscription to the heterodox aesthetics. These practices of “street-aesthetics”, within the disputes for visibility and the plus of the demands these implied, led to the development of vibrant and renovated dramas at the moment of staging conflicts (valuing them) which were updated, re-defined and re-appropriated in social interaction. In this sense, the streets were shaped as a scenario,⁴ where practices, images and tales that dispute in the public space the representation of reality, the legitimacy and power of such representations, emerge.

In the dispute for power of representation –representation which shapes practices- , the collective groups and social movements develop strategies of visibility, based on certain forms and figures, with which they try to symbolize and represent something beyond their demands. Therefore, we will consider that the aesthetic dimension of social protests acquires fundamental relevance in the re-configuration of the conflictive fabrics of Latin American societies, and it is there, where the used expressive resources are constituted as strategic analyzers, by condensing the saying/acting/feeling of the subjects.

This way, the reflections on aesthetics and politics are, yet again, present and necessary before the diverse ways of signifying the political.⁵ The here and there demand – as a platform for the re-construction of the action grammars that tend to modify the positions and conditions of the desiring subjects- constitutes the triggering energy of the aesthetic. In such a framework, street aesthetics are a political way of reproaching the institutional politics their own impotence and melancholy character, making it noticeable before the supremacy of material life conditions.

⁴ When we refer to the scenarios, we will work from Rossana Reguillo’s proposal (2005), who states it from a double level: on a one hand, a metaphoric sense, in order to reconstruct atmospheres as images in movement; and on the other, as configurations that express long-lasting processes and of multiple articulations: economic, social, political and cultural. Thus, as explained by the author, a scenario is not simply a place, but a significant place, therefore, constructed by means of negotiation and dispute.

⁵ For a point of view different from the one here exposed, see Casullo (2006)

In a restrictive sense, the reflection⁶ on “aesthetics” first appeared during the XIX century. Alexander Baumgarten (*Aesthetica*) defined beauty as phenomenal perfection, and the relevance of this definition, in the reflection on art, is that it predominantly dwelt on the apprehension through senses (Williams, 2000: 124). Since then the term “*Aesthetica*” retakes the idea of the sensorial – as that it comes from the Greek term *aisthisis*, which is the sensorial experience of perception- in human creativity, which later would specialize in art. This way, the semantic field of the word was originally linked to the corporeal and material nature, within sensible life- however subsequently the reference to what beautiful is, tied up to the art field, has tried to devour the term. Therefore, given that aesthetics is commonly used in the present day to refer to a matter of appearance and visual effects, it is significant to retrieve such etymology and following development of the aesthetics conception in the sensible life, as a “human dimension” derived from its potential-related to the possibility of awakening other sensibilities, occluded by the dominant version- when the subject matter is aesthetics and how it is related to conflict.

Relations between aesthetics and politics are generally represented as antagonism, a subject of different shapes and constituted by differentiated fabrics, which, however, recognize the persistent efforts, that the essays on the aestheticization of polityics have covered. The antagonistic representation can be understood in the context of the need of a “political discourse” of diverting the attention from the pornographic character of the political institution visibility. As asserted by Garaudy (1964), “art is not a result”; and we add: it is a complex time-space articulation that always shows the actual.

Marx (1974) suggested, some time ago, “We are born with the sensibility of a determined historical period”. A series of authors after him, among which Garaudy can be mentioned one more time, emphasized how the aesthetic expression: “constitutes, after work, one of the thresholds surpassed by men in their overcoming of animalism” (Garaudy, 1968: 14). From this discursive context, the fact that the expression forms that are rooted and based on the sensibilities of the subjects are linked to historical practices in the search of a heterodox place regarding domination is made very clear.

The fact that the expressive resources are anchored in aesthetics criteria and valorization on the materials, artistic sense and production, and that these, at the same time, depend on a particular historical context, is, in present day, obvious. However, for the expressive resources of collective actions and social protests, we can affirm something very similar to what Fisher pointed out about art:

⁶ For a sociological perspective on relationships between art and society, see Heinich (2002).

“It is indubitable that art too, discovers new dominions of reality, by making visible and audible that which used to be invisible and inaudible” (Fisher, 1999:255).

Aesthetics becomes the politics of senses, heterodox and opener of worlds that turn palpable in (and through) this very practice. From a close (but not identical) perspective to ours, we could say, with Adorno: these expressive resources are linked to the political, since they denunciate how “suffering, when turned into a concept, is left voiceless and sterile”, and that is, customarily, the work of institutional politics: to silence and sterilize what is “closer” from the complaints and demands, transforming them into concepts of its policies. The “aesthetics-on-the-streets”, therefore, is a way of jumping over the fence of the duplication of the naturalized as one of the axes of domination and “transcending” in a heterodox manner what is given.

These discussions we consider here were put together through enquiries, forgettings and re-appropriations which, before a new scenario, can be questioned. This way, in monochromatic society, where the capitalist system elaborates a set of policies to regulate sensations, it is very important to consider those readings where the aesthetic is addressed as a referent to the possibility of shaping, showing and activating new sensibilities. The connections between expressive resources, aesthetics-on-the-streets and collective action will allow us to dive into such readings.

Expressive resources and crisis

Which are the ways used by collective actors to stage their demands? How do they color them? How do the bodies, scenes and discourses intermingle inside social protest? These are some of the interrogations that appear in a context of social crisis such as the one lived by Argentina in 2001.

In general, crises respond to the perceptions of representations and practices located temporarily and spatially, linked to a cultural configuration, which starts to feel cracked. If all crisis and conflict are specifically national and recognizes their own processes, at the same time they become a part of the diversity of the existing political cultures in Latin America, implying a shared regional dimension, of these processes.⁷

Here is where we go back to reflect on the power of thinking of the linking ways between culture and politics, based on the observation of which

⁷ For a version of what here is expressed, see “*La cultura en la trastienda de la crisis y los usos políticos de la cultura en las crisis*” in Grimson (2004).

the expressive resources that recreate and activate in a conflictive scenario are. We adopt this way of admission to approach collective action, based on a situated look which allows incorporating the expressivity within the disputes for visibility and within the framing process of the action; namely:

In the framework of recognition and hetero-recognition processes, the expressive resources become collective identity marks, which the actors give themselves in the symbolic practice of appropriation and production of such resources. The message is also oriented towards the contestants who in the frame of a conflictive field identify through these very resources the direction of the antagonistic subject. On the other hand, resources are used to reconstruct understanding spaces which potentiate the generation of consensus. Finally, the expressive resources enable the construction of audiences, where dialectic visibility-invisibility has a place (Scribano, 2003: 125-126).

This way, we can enunciate how the analysis of the expressive resources is linked to the visibility of the subjects within the collective action from the protest. There, a staging of a demand exists, within a conflictive field, which supposes a questioning from the audiences, based on the construction and selection of determined expressive resources. An expressive resource can be conceptualized, then, as a “textual object, which allows socially delimitating, constructing and distributing the sense of the action”.

At the same time expressive resources have a dual reading possibility: they are constructed and used as sense products (results) and are, at the same time, sense in-production (supplies). From the supply perspective, resources are selected and used re-signifying their original position in a determined meaning fabric; whereas from the perspective of results, resources are sieved by a significant production process which derives in an “innovative” utilization. (Scribano, 2003,2005).

This quality of products in sense and meanings in production is what confers mobility to have a reading towards that stock which can be re-signified and that which still persists and is constructing itself. This way, we have results and supplies that enable a way of admission to observe legacies, reconstructions and new creations inside action practices and the senses conferred to the protest by the subjects, visualizing problematic ties in the conflictive networks, upon which action is constructed.

Among the ways of action, and considering the regional scenario once more, we can remember the statements of those who assure that social movements in Latin America move along new ways (especially regarding the use of expressive resources), which separate them both from the old unionist movement and the new movements from the central countries, in the ways they perceive themselves and in the ways they represent themselves in the public space, these instances are

deeply related. Therefore, the characteristics with which they constitute themselves, relate to a second moment, characterized by resistance to the brutal expansion of neoliberal policies and globalization, sharing the content of resistance to the policies of Washington Consensus and its effects (Ansaldi, 2005, 2006).

Different cycles of protests, which ended with the resignation or destabilization of the government platform, such as the cases of Argentina (the claim: *everybody leave*,* of December 19th and 20th, 2001), Bolivia (the taking of the Plaza de los Heroes, which meant the destitution of Sánchez de Lozada in 2003) and Ecuador (the rebellions of Quito 2000-2001 and Los Forajidos in 2005) —among the most significant protests— attest the impact that neoliberal policies had in the nineties across Latin America with the consequent privatization of public services and the natural resources of the region. Likewise, these protests— along with the Mexican movements (beyond the different demands and trajectories of the social actors, which were part of the protest)— printed on the public space reactive ways of fight, which, being initially social, became political and were intercepted by the State (Ansaldi, 2005, 2006) by emphasizing a “sort of contagion” of expressive resources.

At this stage, while the confrontational measures against the political system prevailed (fundamentally questioning the Executive, Legislative and Judicial powers), protests appealed to aesthetic demonstration resources as a way of denouncing both neoliberal policies and the discredit of the partisan institutions within sharp criticism towards the ways of representative democracy. Roadblocks, occupying public buildings, mobilizations in downtown accompanied by dramatic representations, saucepans or candles as aesthetics-on-the-streets, which implied a collective re-appropriation of what is public and political.

This way the protests are characterized by the creativity with which they re-constructed and staged their problems. These “ways” were presented differenced from the red/black binomial of the aesthetics of left wing or the pallets on blue and white from the movements the “national and popular” movements. Symbols such as fists, weapons, flags, stars, were modified/complemented/transformed into non-partisan-flags, and a multiplicity of colors —where aesthetics of zapatismo and other indigenous movements were reproduced in the urban centers— which colored the landscape of the protest in the region. Thus, the expressive resources produce a different effect, by appealing the construction of sensibilities from the recovery of traditions —such as the indigenous, for instance, or the recovery of emotions on their speeches— and from the invention of new ways to fight starting from “that legacy” of ways of fighting.

* TN: “Que se vayan todos”

Postcards from a city-in-conflict

Reconsidering what is conceptually expressed, analyzing expressive resources allows us to sketch a landscape of a conflict situation. In this sense, we will reconstruct from the analysis of the expressive resources in the aesthetics-on-the-streets, those brushstrokes that characterized conflict networks in a certain time and space in the city. These postcards will be used as “strategic analyzers”, since they condense the saying/acting/feelings of the subjects and sketch and paint the problems and conflict points.

Here, and according to the registrations of collective actions in the city of Córdoba,⁸ which are available to us, a set of images which facilitate assembling the postcard, as a message, in such manner that somebody who is absent could imagine the situation through them.

In this line, the register is drawn at a dual level: on the one hand, upon those manifestations where expressivity shows the “tactics” of the subjects to show other ways of conceiving politics, in the sense in that in this article we have given to its link with aesthetics; meanwhile, on the other hand, the registration makes evident those conflicts that persist and repeat themselves.

Preliminaries: lights in white and blue

In December 2001, in Córdoba as well as as in the main Argentinean urban centers, the aesthetical bursted onto the streets as a vehicle of expressivity for the multiple collective hues. Regarding the possibility of drawing the vibrant colors of said postcard, the first images are colored white and blue, which recall the multiplication of Argentinean flags and the intonation of national anthems that accompanied the protest of December 2001 in the city. If the flags strongly appeared months before— with the protest for the defense of *Aerolíneas Argentinas* (Argentinean Airlines) as yet another privatized enterprise, which with its “emptying” dismantled the fictions of “progress” and modern country—, it was during the mobilizations in December that they covered streets of the city.

These images of women, men, youths and children wrapped in flags strolling down into town with saucepans saturated the landscape. The Argentinean National Anthem intoned by thousands of throats, hands grasping blue and white flags implied the re-appropriation of symbols. Those which where the symbols forgotten

⁸ Database for the research: “*Conflicto social y estructuración social en la ciudad de Córdoba: Diciembre 2001 - Mayo 2004*”. Serviproh, Córdoba, 2004. Said database was increased and it implies the register of qualitative information used here to elaborate the sections of Postcards and Quotations.

after the state terrorism in Argentina and commemorative dates in democracy, by sectors such as schools, the army and the imaginary of the popular national, as central institutions of the nation-States, were reconstructed in a rehearsal that opened itself to the collective yet without knowing how to solve it.⁹

The re-signification of being on the streets in thousands of flags of the same color and under the sound of saucepans showed another face of the protest, which in distance and contradiction, in proximity and denial, is assumed from the symbol of the quotidian, and the needs of everyday life, the element of family meal. The “*cacerolazo*” was presented as the “no-place” of emptiness: empty saucepans as instruments to make the civic sounds be heard, where formerly the food of “Argentina the breadbasket of the world” used to be. The private and the public in the tension of the happening that will later lose vitality and disrupting potential.

Here —and linked to what other resource allows reading: “*que se vayan todos*”, from the aesthetics-on-the-streets – the sensation of fullness was made evident: the need for rupture with the partisan colors and the politic parties platforms. This discharge was announced from the *bronca* (fuss) vote, added up to the apathy of absenteeism— which even though they confront, are different ways of lack of credibility – in October, that same year, and the permanent accusations of corruption, the case of the bribery in the national Senate and a party alliance¹⁰ that was falling apart.

In this sense, the participation on marches and other ways of commemoration from the revitalized anniversaries of historical milestones, which exhibit the problems of political representativeness. In May 1969 a revolt, known as the *Cordobazo*, was produced; which was a manifestation of disavow to an illegal and illegitimate factual government, said revolt, which anticipates and exceeds the claims of a general strike and, from the unity between different actors, the city is “taken”. Likewise, on May 25th 1810 the first independence is commemorated through the instauration of a government represented by Argentineans and not

⁹ Due to space restrictions and regarding our objectives we cannot extend, but we remember that different ways of taking a flag and “winning the street” that are far from been heterodox also exist. An interesting moment to observe the distances and proximities would be to compare the year 2001 to the Soccer World Cup of 1978, organized by a militar dictatorship and the “use” of blue and white.

¹⁰ The self-proclaimed Alianza (Alliance), composed of actors representing the Frente Pais Solidario (Solidary Country Front, FREPASO) – where actors the Partido Justicialista (Justice Party) and other smaller left-wing parties converged – along with Unión Radical Cívica (Radical Civic Union, UCR), represented a party creation that would finish with the characteristic two party regime in the Argentinean history .

by Spanish viceroys. These dates, looked upon from the year 2002, brought up a discussion on the relationship of the independence of the Argentina regarding the new “dictators” of the market, dressed up as “liberal viceroys”.

Directly linked to this point, the need of forming a government linked to the wishes and needs of “the people” by rehearsing other forms of participation, people began expressing themselves through posters, construction of objects and the organization of town councils. “*Que se vayan*”, “*El pueblo quiere saber de que se trata*” (The people wants to know what this is about) were shouted from the barrios as yet another way of rehearsing the afterwards of the after.

The incapacity of enunciating the “*después de todo que*” (after all this, what), their negativity pointed, partly, towards the lack of “what”, but indeed moving on with the “how”. This “how” posed the need of creating new forms of politics and links between the subjects and politics, which were a central matter in the discussions between 2001 and 2003.¹¹ The potency of “other” collective actors was tied with the assembly experiences, and multiplied and expanded throughout the barrios, as well as in the factories and the collectives which were formed.

Water and transportation in the toilet city

Other images and shades finish coloring the postcard throughout this period. Here, within the creative compositions, which show how the city was perceived, out of the occurrence –and within the conflictive scenario of the crisis– it was crossed over by the residues left by the shock wave of the crisis. A gigantic toilet expressed the situation of the barrios. The situation “smells” bad in the city; or the city has been transformed into a “shitty” space, or the city has become a space where everything seems to be a waste; or there are certain places in the city – in this case the barrios of the southern area – that are scrapped. Thus the sensations are grouped behind the surprise or the joke of “*¿realmente estamos así?* or *¡no es para tanto!*” (“Are we really that bad? Or it’s not that bad!”) as a part of the standard answers before the challenge of creative composition. Health, litter, streets, food, “living” is where every spectator joins in an interpretation and takes from it the part of the “fuss” they are more related to. Nodding or shaking their heads they connect with the topic of the protest.

¹¹ At this point, in the crisis we have observed two micro-cycles of protest, where the first one, from 2001 to 2003, is related to the effervescence of collective action and the different rehearsals of political participation and organization; while, the second micro-cycle, between 2004 and 2008, makes a reference to the institutionalization of certain actors and practices, at the same time the new disputes of collective wealth appropriation gain space. Some characterizations can be consulted on the published papers. *Cfr.* <<http://www.accioncolectiva.com.ar>>.

Transportation, the forms of circulation and movement in the city, represented a materialized expressive form. The Bus Toilet (*Inodoro Bus*), constituted a collectively “felt” composition, where broken units, lack of regularity, permanent strikes were a part of the daily landscape. Hence in a city with its links broken, the vehicles of circulation and movement resemble a toilet, an object that collects filth. Then, the questioning to the aesthetics sets in a public state that which is lived day by day; the sensibilities, materialized in this expressive form, make people think about what they smell of, what they look at, what they touch, what they breath, what is filtered, which means that “any” person travels in a toilet.

Jointly binding with the aforementioned, in any given moment “dummies waiting at the collective transport stops” could be observed. People who, due to the waiting, frustration, impotence, were turn into dolls. Expressivity at the service of the processes, the chains of situations which make it possible for the world to naturalize: there are always people waiting, since the one who wants to travel must wait, and the expectations are going to be differential, according to the material possibilities of taking a trip and the forms of transportation.

Here appears the gesture, the concrete practices, which can also be expressive resources: “They ironically cheered the arrival of the collective transportation” “*Aplaudieron con ironía a los colectivos que iban llegando*” (They applauded in irony to the arriving busses) the paper read. It was amazing, the waiting had come to an end, the prince who would wake the dolls from the spell and would turn them back into passengers. The humor converted into cheer, the indignation shown as the approval of the ridiculous, of that arrival, which mad everybody run late.

In the same line, concerning the forms of displacement through the city, but with a different aesthetic expression, was the creation of the Carro-colectivo (Collective-Car). The crisis obligated the waste-pickers to return to the city, with their traditional cars pulled by horses. Public transportation had become, as well, a set of cars, because of the slowness and because of the “condition” of the vehicles. People is treated as piled up cardboard, is being carried careless as an object. Here the metaphorical displacement is evident: there (and so) where there is garbage one must read: human beings. The expressive resource allows consolidating interpretations of that, very rich, “first hermeneutic” every subject is capable of doing.

If we take a look to another conflictive network, the problem of public services that were privatized the previous decade is made visible. “*Cambian cuerito a canilla gigante en peatonal*”, (They change of the gasket of a giant faucet in a pedestrian zone) the paper reads. The image of the gigantic faucet, turned into an object, painted over flags, is staged within the body of one of the actors. According to

the crisis scenario, the travels and meanings of the faucet mutated: a great loss, a “drop by drop”, which makes it necessary a change of that which “regulates” (at least partially), “the exit” and the distribution of wealth. The collective expression seems to say “what happens” when the faucet is there to be looked at, shown and, at the same time, is something else, something less, it is exactly the sensation of the conflictive situation having way of fixing, but not getting fixed.

The expressive resources are linked to the practices of public presentation that the agents perform to display them, it is an assembling; the practice is the one that indicates that which wants to be said. And it is a situated practice. In this conflictive network “after the faucet and the gasket”(rubber) denouncing the forms of presentation will be found by the turn of 2006 heading mobilizations of neighbors as the denounces of the “tarifazo” were, and only a few months later, it will circulate, in the middle of assembly encounters for the recuperation of common wealth; faucet which leaves its materiality to turn into water, primal resource and fountain of life.

Some lines written on the Postcard: the politics of the bodies

Within the postcard we have described, two images will give us the possibility to move from the form to the word, as mediators of what we will later analyze as “quotations” of the aesthetics-on-the-streets: the appearance of a woman wearing a transparent dress in the Provincial Legislature and the pedestrian street decorated with gigantic condoms.

The first image-performance points out how the bodies were (and still are) the support of this heterodox expressions. A woman: Argentina. A transparency: the nakedness of politics. The place of reunion of the legislators: the impotence of institutional politics. This expressive mounting clearly points out how the body evolved into a message, denounces the obviousness of the crisis of representation on the one hand, and the frameworks of the end of the seductive characteristic of politics, on the other.

The second image-installation suggests life at risk, where there is no possible prophylaxis. The journey of thousands of Cordoba people who displace on foot between protective devices and prophylaxis indicates a feeling of “staking-the-body” that conflictive situations imply. The unprotected citizens are asking for new morals.

Linked to the previous, the analyzed context, a topic which catches the attention in the registrations is the public status of the denounce of a policy of bodies. A subject complex and a taboo, since “nature” tells us there is nothing more “ours” than the body itself.

a) The claim for autonomy: “My body is mine, I decide”. One of the most complex characteristics of a policy of the bodies is its intention to fasten and turning substantial the heterogenic character of human life. What I refer to as my body becomes such because of my decision, this is the complaint. Nobody can say how it is, how I should behave with it, since if I do not decide it becomes another body. Beyond the agreements and disagreements regarding this subject, the main point is that it makes the conflict of the body visible, another edge in the battle of the bodies.

b) The denunciation of corporal regimes: “Priests and judges: do not dispose on our body and our sexuality”. The accusation is clear, a policy of bodies can only be carried, among others, with togas and cassocks. “*No dice Dios, no dice Justicia*” (God does not say, Justice does not say), corporations who manage the performative power of the words say. The authorized words which inaugurate a narrative structure where supra-individual knowledge is deposited, a plus of knowledge which “over-knows” what is “good” for the bodies, a corporal regime.

c) As we have already said, these postcards (overlapped – fragmented – contingent), also as every postcard, were written; they contain words which connect and disconnect images, and said “writings” are dealt with in the next segment.

Quotations

In the visibility process, when the agents establish a relationship with the press, these support their actions and give them a sense by means of the phrases which try to condense the “mood” of the conflict in reference. In the registrations we are analyzing if it is possible to find a series of affirmations that seem to fulfill the role of “what is written on the backside of a postcard”; this is, they make the feelings, sorrows and delights evident for the addressee. Sometimes over posters sometimes they are affirmed by the agents, they are always used to “clearly” expressing what is beyond the action. The aesthetics-on-the-streets are opened from the saying, which becomes recourse and product of expressivity.

In this writing, which dates and situates the postcards, something tragic, a phrase, short, laconic, almost unnecessary “This is a jungle”. The city is a fight for life, the anguish of bestiality, the uncertainty of not knowing if tomorrow will come. As if by moving up to the high part of the city an image of wildness was observed, an image which implies the perception of risk and generates uncertainty. Uncertainty before roads, which are no longer marked, and the risk of walking amidst the bushes, of transiting before the menace of the claw and the law of the strongest.

This scene of savagery is outlined in pasted tones, where the magical, the comical and the real all cross the different forms of living the conflict. The comical, on its own, can be traced on a –very Cordoba-like– description of the situation of social mismanage and the tagging of the different: “Two drunken policemen, on a motorcycle, drove along the corner of Nieva and Bogota streets—he explained—and they insulted me. And he added: “When I asked them why they insulted me, they grabbed me and told me it was because I was a *piquetero* (political activists, whose main form of manifestation is to block a road). That who protests is odd, it is the one who deserves to be beaten up. If someone is poor, then they must be a *piquetero*, and if that is the case, they must be repressed.

The magical implies a registration, where the measure of the situation depends on the religious: “Little Virgin Mary is highly responsive but she cannot handle so many complaints”. The perception indicates “No God can take this”. In the city, not even the gods can handle so many complaints, it is beyond their power, and regarding the resolution of conflicts, waiting is all that is left to do. Of course, crisis is a matter of simple men.

The real, that which always comes back as horrible, evidences economic interest: “Waters are sent by God, Bugliotti¹² canalizes them”. The unbearable weight of money over the natural and the divine. Before the savagery of the entrepreneurial interests, neither the claw and the appetite of the entrepreneurial groups, nor the strength of nature, nor the gods seem to mark a road before the subjects wrapped in anguish, which provokes uncertainty of transiting through a jungle landscape.

In Argentina, in general, and in Cordoba, in particular, it is very common to hear “middle class” expressions, characterized as a part of the mid sandwich. The crisis of 2001 re-activated –maybe this is one of its positive characteristics– the public presence of those who were considered (or considered themselves) middle class. In the registrations, which serve as a support for this work, it is possible to find expressions similar to those previously mentioned. In order to understand some of the crisis imaginaries, which totalize the scenario, we have selected two sentences which refer to two conflictive networks which, sometimes, go unnoticed.

“The middle class always falls”, “Too old to get a job, too young to retire” is the first phrase. The sense becomes diaphanous because of its disconnection: A retired person is like the middle class and the middle class is like a retired person.

¹² An Important entrepreneur native to Cordoba

The retired person always falls; he is the one nobody remembers, such as the middle class. The middle class is there neither for one thing, nor for another, some think of it as enviable (young man), some think of it as “remediless” (old man), to paraphrase Borges: incorrigible. The middle class is understood (at least from some time ago), in the popular, as those who have a steady job. Two conflicts in one: the permanent deterioration of those in the middle and the dislocation of those expelled from the labor market.

The second sentence is “*Pymes* (Small and middle-sized enterprises, *Pequeñas y medianas empresas*) should not be an object of fiscal repression”. The expression belongs to the narrative originated in Menem’s administration and cannot be understood if it is not in the frame of the game of the language economics=State=repression. Beyond the deformation of the sense of what *Pymes* mean, achieved by ministers, foundations and consultants; there is a conflict network in here. If anyone can think that not everyone who owns an enterprise is like Macri¹³ they would recover a great amount of individuals, who everyday work with a handful of workers and employees. However, on the other hand, if we sharpen our sight, the landscape starts to populate with parvenus and subsidized. This is a conflict on which little has been done, even more, considering the capitalistic re-inaugural crisis on the zone. Beyond this, the crisis increases the fear of repression, in this case of the fiscal type, of taxes as a way of punishment for breaking the deal, when the deal is broken.

In neoliberalism the strongest survives, and *Pymes* are not the strongest, much less their workers. They represent a link easy to break. “The city” —once one of the most industrialized —notifies, alerts on one of the most complex faces of the crisis, national capital is in dissolution or “disolved”. This is to say: What capitalism can we have without a capitalist? Possibly a neo-colonial one.

In this scenario, perceived within the crisis between 2001 and 2003, what did increase in a disproportioned manner was the “feeling” of insecurity and the authoritarian temptation, considering that insecurity is not a “mere” sensation, it is worth analyzing it as an inscription on our postcards. A sensation of “far far West”, of a cowboy movie, crossed all through town and was reproduced and multiplied, starting with the mass media, both from the fiction on TV (just to mention *Tumberos*, an Argentinean TV series) or from “real life” (as policemen in action); radio and press did their part by transmitting and transcribing from the police section to the central pages. Among the many expressions which were daily repeated and that could be used as inscriptions on the postcards about insecurity, we selected the following four:

¹³ An Important National entrepreneur, today Chief of government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

Daily fear was a part of the first inscriptions whose calligraphy would mark the rest: “Around here, “*cuetazos*” (gunfire) are an everyday issue”. The superlative expression of clattering “fireworks” (*cuetazos*), which are part of Christmas celebrations, became common from the firing of the weapons, of the gunshots. The sound of a bullet is now recognizable by anyone, therefore becoming a part of the sounds that characterize a neighborhood.

The altered sociability is transformed and transforms: “This block is a seedbed for delinquents”. The barrio is presented as a school of crime through its space unit “the block”, the message is clearly inferred: daily contact, “naturally” growing up as a criminal. Through a natural analogy, the growth from a seed, the links between delinquency, local school, territory and poverty are naturalized. The block (the space) as a field (seedbed) wherefrom delinquents are born. My own place is that which gives rise to that which should not rise. Common sense has been colonized, has been the object of several neutralizations, and upon the “natural” there is little to be done, it is understood as given, as un-transformable.

Authoritarian intolerance made flesh: “Around here, when many are killed, we get happy, but Daniel was a good kid”. This affirmation shows as an evidence of how the authoritarian became a rule for fears of the crisis. The authoritarian devours those who accept it as a rule. How to distinguish between good and evil when I am glad for an assassination without asking the reasons? How to stop the slaughtering once it has begun? This phrase makes it evident that the discourses on a firm hand, even justice by oneself, have been stabilized under the ingeniousness of the good and the evil; it has become a rule. This pedagogy of the good and the evil, which resounds on the axis of evil on a planetary scale in the middle of the “antiterrorist” outpost in the United States, after 2001, does not seem to need any other structural explanation, where unevenness and inequality are key for admission.

The discriminative specialization was accentuated: “We want the *villa* to be fenced, hold its expansion and take the vagrants somewhere else”. Here, *villa*=poor=delinquent appears as the operation of basic equivalencies. Identity is constructed on discrimination. On a discrimination which as a biological wrong, despite the risk of expanding that “seedbed”, has to be avoided; restraining its expansion, making them circulate on other directions, their “passing by” is a menace; the rubbish elsewhere.

Insecurity is a social creation that responds to a structure of social relationships. The authoritarian and repressive way reifies it (turns it into a thing), and from there it changes into an opportunity of becoming a merchandise, it is hidden, since “there is no way to find it” as a thing. Then, the sensation of insecurity turns into a feeling. Feeling frightened before the picture of the savage has a selective focus

where the suspicions, which become a tag, on the ways of “bad living” have a face, height and sex and on places where to separate them from the “good neighbors”, which are the only entitled to the right to move in the city.

The puzzle of conflict

Having reached this point, let us recover some expressions and images to assemble the puzzle of the conflictive situation, which, beyond a “thematic” consideration, construct a telegraphic narration for these postcards.

Citizenship, youth, economy and public administration; territorial habitability, childhood and food, write a grammar of the actions, which show proximities and oppositions that are drawn through expressive resources.

The pornography of the system: “*La empresa le tira la pelota a la municipalidad*” (“The enterprise makes the municipality responsible”). Before the crisis for the State, before the crisis without a State, the profound breaks announce the obvious: the economy is in command. A soccer analogy points out which type of game it is, which role the State plays and who owns the ball. The creation of this soccer image of the “pass” multiplied itself before the experiences of privatizations and their effects. Thus, as we remembered at the beginning, what the “costs” of the airlines privatizations meant and the subsequent defense of the “flag line” in the conflictive national frame, other points made the results of the privatizing errors evident: Tartagal and General Mosconi before the privatization of oil, the new missing laborers who became piqueteros and middle political functionaries appearing as mediators; the conflicts about water supply in Cordoba, international enterprises, which pass to local entrepreneurs, sings and subjected agreements that subject provincial rulers.¹⁴ State and market tied up, but with a different maneuver margin.

Citizenship as a practice: “A citizen is not born, is made”. Against any reification, here appears the insistence on what is abstract and formal ends up being the important if it becomes a practice. Making a citizen is to go against the prejudice that we are all citizens, as not everyone becomes a citizen. At any rate, this inscription on the postcard makes evident one of the main networks of conflict in the city, which is the citizenship crisis. A crisis which adopted diverse forms within the conflict, from the new assembly practices, between 2001 and 2003, up until

¹⁴ The reconstructions of some of these conflicts can be consulted in *Boletín Onteaiken*, num. 7, year 4, Cordoba, May, 2008. Available at: <<http://www.accioncolectiva.com.ar/revista/www/sitio/boletines/ver/boletin7.htm>>.

the attempts of patches and absences linked to the public-administrative —such was the case of the creation of the Health Board or the Tent for Recall of the city mayor mandate.¹⁵ Such multi-sectoral experiences once again accentuate that a citizen is not born, but made.

Invisibility: “We, young people, are here but we are not seen”. Being without being perceived, the need to be heard is one of the tips of the youth problem in the city. They are at the corners when they need someone to point at, they are arrested when they need to find culprits; they are at school when they need to find a poster for the campaign, they are always there but just as young people, they simply are. This expression is re-updated in the last march of 2008 for the right of children: an ear for the kids. Here the need to be heard, beyond the visibility mediated by the media, questions an attitude of active reception from the creation and recognition of a space where their voice, their tales, their emotions are audible, in a city where the increase of criminalization and poverty, after the arbitrary detentions for “carrying a face” —as referred to by the young people grouped in collectives— characterize this landscape.

The central margin: “We are forgotten, the barrio does not progress”. Barrios struggle to enter the city, in order to obtain a safe-conduct which allows them to cross the walls that condemn them to the outskirts. The old imaginary “of progress” comes back to transfer the problem towards the future and leave the door open, so that, some day, remembering the barrios, progress comes back and re-directs to the center. The forgetting of the margins is, likewise, a condition for the reproduction of the centers. This expression multiplied itself with the amount of news, photographs, screamed testimonials that ranged from the problems with the supply of services to “insecurity sensations” in the barrio, the menace from the arrival of the *villa*. The “dream of an own house”, where lives are fully dedicated to such a goal, is added to the previous expression. So was expressed by the counter-protest made by the neighbors of the Ituzaigno barrio. This annexed to the denunciation of around 20 deaths by cancer and malformations, due to the use of insecticides on the adjoining fields. “Housing is devaluing around here, houses and plots are much cheaper by the day”, such were the phrases of those denouncing the baldness and carried surgical masks along the streets of the barrio. The barrio does not progress.

¹⁵ Both experiences were two of the most relevant after the year 2001, because they constituted a first encounter to make multi-sectoral spaces, at the same time they started operating mechanisms of participatory democracy and citizen control.

Children first: “Children deserve to have more than one plate of food...”. Something more than canteens transformed into poorly conditioned meal houses. They deserve something more than the food given to them because their parents cannot afford to feed them and cannot maintain the imagery of the family table. Meal house as a storage of children to “adopt” depoliticize the causes of hunger and the possibilities of a different childhood. In this sense, possibly, there is not a more overwhelming image in the Argentinean collective imaginaries than the mythical narrations about the place of the children. More than 20 years of neoliberalism—in its different institutional variations—produced the public appearance of the forgetting of those very children. The gigantic images of those kids, dolls, murgas and placards traveled through the different cities and localities of Argentina during *La marcha de los Chicos del Pueblo* (The march of the Town Kids)¹⁶ with the motto: “*ni un pibe menos*” (not a single kid), so that hungry kids would be no more in a country “made of bread”. This country, which is “made of bread”, shows the other side of what is publically accepted: the breadbasket of the world cannot feed its own children. Perhaps what they are asking for is a dignified life and being able to have a future; too much to ask for the conflictive Córdoba.

The postcards, phrases and the puzzle, as an argumentative resource to narrate the expressive, are in themselves evidence of what occurs when expressivities are taken for analysis: the emergence of the complex frame of the space occupied by the here, by the plus of denunciations established by collective actors.

We have narrated (and attended) the policies of the senses that the “aesthetics-on-the-streets” have allowed us to grasp. We have “captured” a few ways to see and hear that install the features of a world that is neither seen nor heard, the world of the *no*, and which is condemned to suffer from institutional policy in its melancholic features. To finish this work let us concentrate on the potentialities that come in the analysis of the aforementioned “here”.

Expressing from the here of demands

There are many possibilities in the records cited. However, to point out some directions in the analysis of collective actions from its expressive resources, we propose to highlight only some that are the ones we have prioritized in this presentation: 1) when watching the game of distances-proximities between the established demands and expressive resources it becomes evident that the

¹⁶ In 2000, the first march started in La Quiaca, Jujuy; in 2002, in Puerto Iguazú, Misiones; in 2005, Tucumán; and in 2007 it started, once again, in Puerto Iguazú. This march originated because of the National Movement of the Town Kids, which reunited 400 organizations from the social sector all around the country.

identification, systematization, description and explanation of the aforementioned demands is a necessary step, insufficient to find the contrast between institutional policies and rebel practices, nevertheless; 2) linked to this, among these contrasts, the pornography of the frames of the institutional policy, which freezes as “concepts” the demands of social actors and the purposes of infecting them with their melancholic state, is a more than important hint to retake the protest from the sensibilities proposed by its “aesthetics-on-the-streets”; 3) analyzing the articulations between these “aesthetics-on-the-streets” and the expressive resources seriously calls to attention on how the collective actors play an important role on the disputes of the policies of emotions; 4) consequently, and related to the previously exposed, we can consider that the urge of persisting in the effort to articulate legacies for the studies on collective action and the possible analysis from a sociology of emotions becomes evident. A matter in which the notes and the analysis exposed here are framed.

Finally, the possible correlations between the “aesthetics-on-the-streets”, expressive resources and collective actors, clearly indicate the direction of the analysis of heterodox practices, linked to the rebelliousness against the policy of emotions, which the current domination system constructs.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund (1983), *Teoría Estética*, Madrid: Orbis.
- Ansaldi, Waldo (2005-2006), “Quedarse afuera ladrando como perros a los muros. Protesta Movimientos sociales en América Latina en la bisagra de los siglos XX y XXI”, in *Anuario 21*, Rosario: School of History of the Faculty of Humanities and Art at the National University of Rosario.
- Buck-Morss, Susan (2005), *Walter Benjamín, escritor revolucionario*, Buenos Aires: Interzona.
- Casullo, Nicolás (2006), “El milenario camino de una actualidad en debate”, in *Pensamiento de los Confines*, June, num. 18, Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Garaudy, Roger (1964), *Hacia un realismo sin fronteras*, Buenos Aires: Lautaro.
- Garaudy, Roger *et al.* (1986), *Estética y Marxismo*, Buenos Aires: Planeta Agostini.
- Grimson, Alejandro (2004), *La cultura en las crisis latinoamericanas*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Heinich, Nathalie (2002), *La sociología del Arte*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión.
- Fischer, Ernest (1999), *La necesidad del Arte*, Barcelona: Ediciones Altaza.
- Marx, Karl (1974), *Manuscritos: Economía y Filosofía*, Madrid: Alianza.

- Reguillo, Rossana (2005), *Horizontes fragmentados. Comunicación, cultura, pospolítica. El (des)orden global y sus figuras*, Mexico: ITESO.
- Scribano, Adrián (2009), “Ciudad de mis sueños: hacia una hipótesis sobre el lugar de los sueños en las políticas de las emociones”, in Boito María Eugenia and Ana Levstein [comps.], *De Insomnios y Vigilias en el espacio urbano cordobés. Lecturas sobre Ciudad de mis sueños*, Cordoba: Sarmiento Editor.
- Scribano, Adrián (2008), “Sensaciones, Conflicto y Cuerpo en Argentina después del 2001”, in *Espacio Abierto*, April-June, year-vol. 17, num. 002, Venezuela: Asociación Venezolana de Sociología.
- Scribano, Adrián (2007), “La Sociedad hecha callo: conflictividad, dolor social y regulación de las sensaciones”, in Scribano, Adrián [comp.], *Mapeando Interiores. Cuerpo, Conflicto y Sensaciones*, Cordoba: CEA-National University of Cordoba.
- Scribano, Adrián (2005), “A modo de cierre: El fantasma cordobés: Ni docta, ni isla, ni progre”, in Scribano, Adrián [comp.], *Geometría del conflicto: Estudios sobre acción colectiva y conflicto social*, Cordoba: Universitas.
- Scribano, Adrián (2003a), “Reflexiones sobre una estrategia metodológica para el análisis de las protestas sociales”, in *Sociologías*, January-June, year 5, num. 9, Porto Alegre.
- Scribano, Adrián (2003b), *Una voz de muchas voces. Acción colectiva y Organizaciones de Base. De las prácticas a los conceptos*, Cordoba: Serviproh.
- Scribano, Adrián (1999), “Argentina Cortada: ‘Cortes de Ruta’ y Visibilidad Social en el Contexto del Ajuste”, in López Maya, Margarita [edit.], *Lucha popular, democracia, neoliberalismo: protesta popular en América Latina en los años del ajuste*, Venezuela: Nueva Visión.
- Scribano, Adrián and Federico Schuster (2001), “Protesta social en la Argentina de 2001: entre la normalidad y la ruptura”, in *Observatorio Social de América Latina*, September, num. 5, Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Williams Raymond (2000), *Palabras clave. Un vocabulario de la cultura y la sociedad*, Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.
- Williams Raymond (1977), *Marxismo y literatura*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Península.
- Electronic Resources**
- Programa de Estudios sobre acción colectiva y conflicto social. Available at: <<http://www.accioncolectiva.com.ar/revista/.htm>>
- Investigation data base: “Conflicto social y estructuración social en la Ciudad de Córdoba: Diciembre 2001 - Mayo 2004”. Serviproh, Cordoba, 2004.

Adrián Scribano. Independent researcher, CONICET. Coordinator of the Study Program on Collective Action and Social Conflict at the Center of Advance Studies, Executing Unity of the CONICET (CEA-UE) of the National University of Córdoba (UNC), Argentina. Coordinator of Sociology and regular professor of the Institute of Social Sciences of the National University of Villa Maria (UNVM). Recent publications: “Fantasmas y fantasías sociales: notas para un homenaje a T. W. Adorno desde Argentina”, in *Intersticios: Revista Sociológica de Pensamiento Crítico*, num. 2, Spain (2008a); “Cuerpo, conflicto y emociones: en Argentina después del 2001”, in *Revista Espacio Abierto*, April-June, Venezuela (2008b); *Estudios sobre teoría social contemporánea*, Buenos Aires (2009).

Ximena Cabral. CONICET grant-holder, candidate to master in Political Parties and candidate to doctor in Social Studies on Latin America from the Center of Advanced Studies (CEA) of the National University of Cordoba (UNC). Member of the Program of Studies on Collective Action and Social Conflict (CEA-UE). Recent Publications: “Control ciudadano y participación política en las asambleas barriales. Demandas, trayectorias y redes”, in *Movimientos sociales. Experiencias históricas. Tendencias y conflictos. Anuario*, num. 21 (2005-2006); (*et al.*) “Tramas conflictuales / intersticios para la acción: cuerpo (s), espacio (s) y recursos expresivos en las luchas socio-ambientales y su reescritura mediática”, in *Los movimientos sociales en América Latina. Pasado, presente y perspectivas*, Buenos Aires (2008a); “La estética radical. Apuntes sobre la imaginación política en América Latina”, in *XVI Jornadas Jóvenes Investigadores. Grupo Montevideo*, Uruguay (2008b).

Send to dictum: May 12th, 2009

Approval: June 4th, 2009